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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of genre within a literacy based curriculum of the German department at Georgetown University. Recently, the department finished its 3-year implementation phase of a curriculum reform and is currently involved in the ongoing maintenance and refinement of curricular features such as writing and speaking tasks. Curriculum goals are geared toward gaining a set of multiple literacies, introducing students to a range of different disciplines and contexts. In the first phase of the project, interviews with faculty and teaching and non-teaching graduate students sought insights into their perceptions of genre and its pedagogical applications within the curriculum. The second phase involved compiling and analyzing all texts used pedagogically at all four levels of the curriculum. One of the pervasive themes that emerged was the relationship between genres and curricular progression. This paper addresses structural and linguistic complexity as related to genre progression. It also focuses on how genres, as contextualized frameworks, are realized along the primary-secondary discourse continuum. It concludes that success involves not only adequate linguistic and content knowledge, but also understanding of the greater context. (Contains 21 references.) (SM)

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Genre: Where art thou?
Tracing the Role of Genre in the Foreign Language Curriculum

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UC Consortium Conference on Language Learning and Teaching (Irvine, CA)
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Tracing the Role of Genre in the Foreign Language Curriculum

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Introduction

This presentation explores the role of genre within a literacy-based curriculum of the German department at Georgetown University (GUGD). Two years ago the department finished its three year-long implementation phase of a curriculum reform and is currently involved in the on-going maintenance and refinement of curricular features such as writing and speaking tasks (for more information on the curriculum reform and maintenance, consult the department website at www.georgetown.edu/departments/German/curriculum/curriculum.html). In our work we hope to offer another perspective to curriculum maintenance. The GUGD curriculum "Developing Multiple Literacies" is conceived of as an integrated content-oriented and task-based approach and is conceptualized to enable learners to become competent and multi-literate non-native users of German who can employ the language in a range of intellectual, professional, and personal contexts.

This study is located within a larger 2-year department wide action-research project sponsored by the Teacher/Practitioner Grant from the Spencer Foundation (Practitioner Research Communication and Mentoring Grants of the Spencer Foundation; grant number 00-3-172-01). The project stemmed in part from a need among members of the GUGD to have common working definitions for the notion of genre, as well as that of narrative, terms, which are central to its curriculum and pedagogical materials. Additionally, this study was motivated by the desire

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to see how the awareness of genre could inform our pedagogical practices in the classroom and across the curriculum.

Interview data: Analysis and discussion

The first phase of the project consisted of collection and analysis of qualitative interview data from 8 faculty members and 14 teaching and non-teaching graduate students in the department to gain insight into the instructors' perceptions of genre and its pedagogical applications within the curriculum. In particular, the interview addressed several areas: the notion and definitions of genre, genre differences between L1 and L2, genre and creativity, genre and difficulty, genre and teaching practices, and genre and authenticity. The second phase constituted the compilation and analysis of all texts used pedagogically at all four levels of the curriculum.

Let us begin with the first phase. We will briefly outline the major findings from the interview data. One of the first questions that we asked our informants was 'What is your definition of the term 'genre,' how do you understand this concept, and could you provide examples?' The most frequent common definition that shows up in our data is phrased in terms of the traditional split of major literary genres: namely, prose, poetry and drama. This fact is hardly surprising considering that our informants are coming from the language and literature department and the majority of them name literary studies as the primary (and often the only) source of their notions about genre. However, only three informants were consistent in applying this tri-partite definition of genre throughout the interview, while the rest chose to apply the term more freely as the interview progressed. Among the informants who gave other definitions of genre, five – all of whom concentrate their research on the fields of general linguistics and SLA

– have specifically identified the school of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1985; Eggins 1994) as one of their sources for understanding genre.

Several people made a comment that their definitions of genre differ depending on the context in which the term is used; they differentiated between art and media context, research context, and teaching context. Since our informants were well aware that for the purposes of our study we are primarily interested in the teaching context, they felt free to apply the term 'genre' to the various text types when talking about their teaching practices and the departmental curriculum in general. However, a few chose to reserve the term 'genre' exclusively for prose, poetry, and drama and suggested that in our curriculum context terms as 'sub-genres' or 'text types' would be more appropriate. They claimed that these terms might be 'more neutral', since they generally consider the term 'genre' to be associated with the tri-partite division within the literary tradition.

Quite a few people saw genre as a way to categorize or classify texts on the basis of many features among which the most prominent was the communicative and socio-cultural context in which genre appears. Most – if not all – of our informants see genre as a culturally, socially and historically determined and situated practice. To quote one of the informants: 'the awareness of genre is a part of cultural literacy'.

As evidenced from the above discussion, the definitions of genre vary considerably among the members of the department. Therefore, it is not surprising that when we asked our informants to name some examples of genre, we received answers on quite a broad spectrum. Many informants explicitly differentiated between literary and non-literary, fictional and non-fictional, monologic and dialogic, formal and informal, and public and private genres. Examples of written genres ranged from literary genres, to academic genres, to everyday-use genres, to pedagogical

genres. 19 out of 22 respondents included spoken discourse under the notion of genre as well. Generally, however, we have received much longer and more detailed lists of written genres than of spoken ones. For details of genres that in fact appear in the curriculum, as reported by informants, see Table 1. It should be noted that most informants moved quickly in and out of "genre" as a construct, and the three constructs, genre-text-task, seemed quite fluidly related in their mind.

A closer look at the curriculum revealed that several upper-level courses are based on particular genres; for instance, courses on mysteries, German comedies, fairy tales, autobiographies, radio plays, dramas and novellas. Additionally within the interviews, informants mentioned how genre can be used to structure units within courses, to structure the curriculum itself, as well as act as a means for checking on the diversity of the curriculum.

Genres and discourses

One of the pervasive themes that emerged from the data without being directly prompted was the relationship between genres and curricular progression. Questions that triggered the notion of progression in informants were "What types of genres appear at different levels?" and "What do you think makes some genres more difficult to acquire?" A most prominent category under which genre difficulty was linked to curricular progression was that of a shift from primary/personal discourses to secondary/public discourses: 10 out of 22 of our informants conceptualize genre sequencing in these terms. The majority of informants mentioned the predominance of genres requiring presentation of personal information on the introductory level (Level I). They indicated a transition to personal stories of other people on the intermediate and

advanced levels (Levels II and III respectively). And they pointed to public discourse genres at Level IV: magazine articles, précis, legal briefs, research papers, and speeches.

In general, the problem of sequencing was articulated by the informants in the interviews as a function of five properties:

1. Structural and linguistic complexity
2. Familiarity
3. Nature of the task
4. Cognitive difficulty
5. Interest and motivation

In this presentation, we will discuss only the first factor, since it relates to the issue of genre progression. Our informants related difficulty in public discourse genres to structural complexity and to more complex linguistic patterns resulting from it. Public discourse texts believed to be situated at the higher levels of the curriculum were characterized by an argumentative "comparative-analytical" and "interpretative-analytical" configurations. Two informants mentioned the difficulty of genres that incorporate other subgenres (like a précis). Argumentative texts were opposed to easier, chronologically-oriented texts, like some personal narratives. Other informants referred to an increase in linguistic complexity in connection to secondary discourse genres. The following factors were identified as contributing to linguistic complexity in genre comprehension and production:

- Move from verbal to nominal paradigm
- Move from active to passive voice
- Semantic complexity
- More variation in grammatical forms: for example, more varied verb tenses (subjunctive)
- Use of vocabulary specific of a certain academic discipline

This move from private to public discourses, as mentioned by our informants, is discussed by Gee (1990) in terms of primary and secondary discourses (a term we have already mentioned

within the context of our informant data). According to Gee, the primary discourse corresponds roughly to the oral mode of communication in which the familiar sphere of living plays a central role. The secondary discourses, built on these primary ways of being, represent more formal ways of life found in public, institutional settings. Yet, as cultural linguists have already shown in ethnographic studies (i.e., Heath 1983; Gee 1990, 1998), primary discourses are not universal and can in fact vary greatly amongst native speakers of the same language. Additionally, primary discourses influence the secondary discourses upon which they are drawn. The difference depends on the presence of institutions and the relationships between participants. Figure 1 summarizes the differences between primary and secondary discourses as described by Gee (1998).

Primary discourses:

- developed in the primary process of enculturation

Secondary discourses:

- involve social institutions beyond the family, no matter how much they also involve the family. These institutions all share the factor that they require one to communicate with non-intimates (or to treat intimates as if they were not intimates).
- build on and extend the uses of languages we acquired as part of our primary discourse

(Gee 1998)

Figure 1.

This constructive relationship between discourse areas is similar to the Bakhtinian notion of speech genres, in which the secondary (more complex) ones draw on the primary ones, and "assume" their own "special character" in the process (Bakhtin 1986, p. 62). Literary language, as Bakhtin and others note, is notorious for taking features of everyday dialogue and placing them within more complex secondary genres, thereby giving these utterances new meaning in the context of a new work (Bakhtin 1986; Tannen 1989).

Reflecting Bakhtin's commitment to context, genre, just like discourse, affords social practice a prominent role. Below there are several definitions of the term genre seen in three different traditions of genre theory in learning contexts: that of Australian genre-based pedagogies, English for Special Purposes, and New Rhetoric (Hyon 1996). Just as our informants offered varying definitions of the term, differing interpretations appear also in the literature - all however include the social situatedness of genre.

1. "Genres are configurations of meaning that are recurrently phased together to enact social practices." (Martin 2002)
2. "A genre exists only in the recognition and attributions of the users." (Bazerman 1994)
3. "... Some set of communicative purposes [and] various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience." (Swales 1990).

As Paltridge 2002 elaborates, it is precisely the social practice that distinguishes genre from text type in particular (Paltridge 2002). Guleff 2002 offers a concrete example of fore-grounding the social aspect of genre in teaching practices, as she shows how community practices in an anthropology course can contribute to more successful student participation and lay the foundations for further work in the field.

Analysis of teaching materials from genre perspective: Can we speak of genre progression?

Interested in pursuing our informants' notions of the relationship between genre and discourse, we set out to understand how genres, as contextualized frameworks, are realized along the primary/secondary discourse continuum. To this end, we are in the process of conducting an analysis of all the texts that are used as instructional materials during Fall 2001 at the first four levels of the curriculum. Looking to the literature on genre applications in pedagogical settings

(particularly at contributions in *Genre in the Classroom* book (Johns 2002) by Bhatia, Flowerdew, Grabe, Guleff, Hyon, Martin, and Paltridge, as well as at Christie 1997), we established a framework, in which prominent genre features were represented (for a sample analysis of two texts, see Table 2).

Because of the diverse nature of the discourses used in the curriculum, we struggled somewhat during our first step in identifying and then comparing these dominant features. Unlike most of the genre studies in the wider literature that are located in specific fields of discipline (predominantly those found in ESP and functional linguistics), the collection of texts in the German department curriculum spans a wide range of fields of inquiry, as well as represents both primary and secondary discourses. But despite Miller's concluding statement in her 1984 article on genre that creating a taxonomy of (rhetorical) genres is an impossible task, since "the number of genres current in any society is indeterminate and depends upon the complexity and diversity of the society" (p. 163), we have begun to embark on a text analysis that involves texts representing much more diverse ways of life than those typically dealt with in studies of particular academic (Eggins, et al. 1993) or workplace (Bazerman 1994) disciplines. This is likely to be a phenomenon of many current foreign language departments in collegiate settings, where the development towards programmatic change involves increasingly more diversified interdisciplinary approaches.

In attempting to differentiate between the primary and secondary discourses that our informants suggested to us, we set out to analyze the text materials to see to what extent the progression following the primary/secondary discourse dichotomy exists.

While the issue of progression of text types (particularly from narrative to more expository modes) is well-documented in the literature (see Grabe 2002 for a literature review that includes

research in the fields of psychology, education, and linguistics), we found among our data set, and as Martin 2002 also recently points out, a number of genres that do not fall on the continuum of narration to exposition. This includes the entire family of service encounter genres, those of interviewing, and those indicative of casual speech which are more interpersonally-motivated, to name a few.

As evident from Table 3, the majority of texts corresponding to the genres on the primary discourse level (as defined by Gee above) are located primarily at the beginning level of instruction. As one can see, the secondary discourses, representing institutionalized settings, already begin at Level I and continue on in the curriculum, where at Level IV only genres found in secondary uses of language appear.

As one might imagine, within a foreign language teaching context, the boundaries of these two discourse frames are however not always clear, and in fact, there may arise instances of "blurring" between the two, as we noted on our grid.

To get a sense of progression that may occur in terms of generic features, we chose a particular theme represented in varying degrees in all of the first four levels of the curriculum, namely that of school and education in German-speaking contexts. We then posed the questions: Can one really speak of a progression in terms of primary and secondary discourses as reflected in the respective genres? And what in particular do these differences offer us in the development of linguistic and content knowledge?

The progression from primary to secondary discourses can be illustrated by looking at the situational context in which these texts are located. Here we refer both to the settings and the participants involved in the interaction. As one can see with the genres provided in Table 4, there in fact exists a shift from interaction involving a close circle of intimates such as those

genres located in Level I to positioning oneself against a broader societal context, which involves taking on roles defined by institutions such as in those genres seen in Level IV. From this preliminary analysis we can already see that these constellations of relationships follow particular linguistic patterns. In the genres representing the earlier levels of instruction we find mention of specific participants through the use of first and second person referring terms. At the upper levels of instruction, on the other hand, where content is increasingly more oriented towards generic participants, positioning comes about through such linguistic means as passive voice, modality and other markers of evaluation, such as discourse particles.

Just as particular genres employ particular linguistic means, so too are certain content areas better suited for certain genres. Casual conversation used in Level I, for example, allows speakers to engage in such personally centered topics as Talents, Plans and Duties, one of the six units in the first semester course. In Level II, we find two genres, TV docudrama and short opinion poll answers used to illustrate East German society after the Fall of the Berlin wall. The first portrays post-GDR life; the second highlights the issues predominant in GDR society via a Question/Answer format. Both of these are situated within the institution of education. The genres used at Level III, particularly the interviews, deal with recent historical events and give learners insight into the interviewees' personal reflections concerning changes in the secondary school system. One of the three thematic units in the Level IV course deals with developing students' understanding of the system of higher education in Germany, most specifically developing familiarity with the major policy issues that are currently heard in the German-speaking press. Here, one finds a number of expository genres that present viewpoints and arguments for and against a proposed reform of the German educational system. Through these

genres, students can acquire knowledge of the role of education in the personal and public discourses of German society.

As a result of this analysis, we can begin to get a sense of other genres situated within educational settings that could offer richer linguistic possibilities and more varied perspectives within a particular theme - all leading to fuller participation of students in the multiple "ways of being" (Gee 1990).

Conclusion

The goals of the German Department's curriculum, as its name implies, are geared towards gaining a set of multiple literacies. This means that students are introduced to a range of different disciplines and contexts (such as literature, history, business, film, to name the most obvious) so as to prepare students for situations not solely located within familiar settings and involving personal relationships, but also those involving institutionalized contexts, particularly found within academic environments. These goals are not unlike those of many foreign language departments, where success is ultimately measured in terms of being able to interact in a myriad of contexts. As we have shown, this does not merely mean having adequate linguistic or content knowledge, but rather signifies knowledge about how the two relate to each other - in other words, understanding the greater context. Genre may in fact lend insight into how these two interact, thereby giving us a sense as language practitioners of what texts can potentially provide for us.

Because this analysis is located within a greater curriculum, we hope to provide our informants with a more global sense of genres we currently use in the department, and as categorized according to their dominant features. In particular, we believe this information will

be useful to them in efforts related to curriculum maintenance, including not only course design but also text selection for courses already in place. A few of our informants expressed the need to know more about spoken genres to enable them to provide students with appropriate genre-related feedback in oral tasks. As very few of our informants were able to comment on teaching practices at all levels, analysis of the texts should also provide the instructors with an opportunity to understand their role within the larger curricular framework.

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Table 1
Genres appearing in the GUGD curriculum (as reported by informants)

Level I	poem, nursery rhyme, song, narrative, short story, exposition text, newspaper article, web-based text, description of a room, a letter to a friend, personal ad and response to it, apartment search ad, invitation, message on a holiday card, horoscope, travel account, giving directions, recipe
Level II	letter to a friend, fairy tale, novel, soap opera
Level III	short story, novel, personal narrative, newspaper article, legal brief, editorial essay, personal letter, letter of protest, interview, group presentation, panel discussion, talk show, film, movie review, song
Level IV	short novel, story, letter to the editor, personal letter, diary entry, précis, newspaper article, magazine article, handbook for university students
Level V	comedy, comedy skit, scene analysis, miniature drama, fairy tale, detective story, autobiography, (personal and public) diary, journal, reflective essay, interpretive essay, (personal and public) letter, public narrative, political and sociocultural reporting, newspaper article, Feuilleton, research paper, academic article, précis, book review

Table 2
Framework for genre text analysis (examples from Level IV course, "Text in Context")

1. Text name (English translation)	*Information für deutsche Studierende (Information for German students)*	*Die Reform als Gerippe (The reform as a skeleton)*
2. Communicative Purpose: (a) overarching purpose of communicative event, social function of genre (b) pedagogical use	(a) to provide orientation for students to university life at a German university (b) to provide students with sense of campus and academic life at a German university; to serve as basis for compare and contrast of German and American universities	(a) to critique reform attempts by politicians and suggest plan of action (b) to introduce students to major themes in topic of reform within higher education; to analyze text structure and use as basis for short oral presentation
3. Rhetorical function/structure (i.e., description, narration, instruction, compare-contrast, cause & effect, classification, evaluation, explanation, argumentation)	- instruction - classification - description (especially in glossary provided at end of text) - explanation	- evaluation - argumentation - (some) compare and contrast - (some) cause and effect
4. Topic/Content	tips for acclimating one's self in German university	reform of German higher education
5. Semantic fields (lexis primarily from teaching standpoint)	- *Leben am Campus* (life on campus) - *Einschreibung an der Uni* (matriculation) - *Finanzierung des Studiums* (financing studies)	- Reform (reform) - Universität, Ausbildung (university, education)
6. Dominant or typical linguistic/grammatical features	- imperatives - modality (modal verbs) - slang (used for section titles throughout text) - high register elsewhere (marked by nominalizations, passive) - certain information bulleted (lists) - relative clauses (esp. in glossary section) - audience spoken to directly (i.e., *Für den Zugang zur Bibliothek müssen Sie...)*	- repetition of arguments/points - metaphors - high concentration of nominalizations - subjunctive - referring terms to create cohesion between text sections - evaluative particles (i.e., *unabdingbar, womöglich*) to show author's position - varied sentence structure
7. Intended audience	incoming German university students	readers interested in present debate on university reform efforts
8. Public vs. private (as characterized by "institutional" representation)	public	public
9. Fictional vs. nonfictional	nonfictional	nonfictional
10. German "genre" name	Anweisungen	Leitartikel
11. English "genre" name	instructions	editorial

Table 3
Genres across the GUGD curriculum: from primary to secondary discourses (in parenthesis number of texts belonging to this genre students encounter, if more than one)

	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Primary discourses	casual conversations (14) picture story (15) cartoon strip personal narrative (2) recipe	personal narrative journal entry children's fairy tale (2)	journal entry (4) personal account personal narrative (3) personal narrative/account	
"Blurred" discourses, including literary works and other forms of artistic expression	personal ads (many in one newspaper section) culinary show information enquiry (3) short descriptive text song rhyme (2) poem (7)	reflective essay (2) autobiographical portrait short novel poem (5) song literary fairy tale (3)	short story (5) poem song (2) novel dramatic film (2) short story/personal narrative autobiographical narrative	novel poem short story (within it: formal letter/phone conversation)
Secondary discourses	service encounters (4) weather report report card information text (2) housing ads (2) traveling ads (many in 1 newspaper section) TV report statistical report (3) detective story/police report pros and cons newspaper feature article (2)	TV report (5) interview (2) political cartoons (5) newspaper feature article (2) documentary (3) statistical report (5) chronicle (2) argumentative essay short opinion poll answers short lecture information text brochure encyclopedia article magazine feature article	film review interview/personal narrative short lecture political appeal (2) magazine feature article/interview slogans survey report newspaper feature article formal interview newspaper feature article/personal narrative (2) historical account (3) documentary/interviews/historical narrative political cartoon (2) information text chronicle political speech focus group/interview	chronicle political speech (2) historical narrative reflective essay/personal narrative information text information text/ instructions/glossary academic comparative article editorial (3) editorial/study report formal interview information text/book introduction book review essay (Feuilleton)

Table 4
Following thematic continuity through genre

Genre	Key linguistic features	Context	Participants	Pedagogical Context
Level I **Experiencing the German-speaking World**				
Casual conversation	Present perfect, 1st and 2nd person referring terms, specific participants, colloquial expressions, modal verbs	Student cafeteria	Students	"Talent, Plans, Responsibilities"
Casual conversation	Present perfect, 1st and 2nd person referring terms, specific participants, colloquial expressions	School yard	Students	"Free Time and Entertainment"
Report card	Nouns, numerals, formulaic categories (i.e., *name, date*), specific participants, 3rd person referring terms	(1) School institution (2) Classroom	School institution, teacher, student, parents/guardian	"Talent, Plans, Responsibilities"
Level II **Contemporary Germany**				
TV docudrama	Colloquial language, dialogic speech of everyday life, specific participants	TV drama	Teachers, students, families, friends	"Fall of the Wall"
Short opinion poll answers	1st person referring terms, expressions of opinion, colloquial language, chain-linking discourse	Secondary school	Students, reporter(s)	"Fall of the Wall"
Magazine feature article	Passive voice, subordinating, clauses, reported and direct speech, generic and specific participants, 3rd person referring terms	International school in Brussels	Reporter/writer, student, teachers	"European Union"
Level III **Stories and Histories**				
Interview; personal narrative	Direct question, expressions of opinion, elliptical sentences, variation of sentence structure, present perfect and narrative past, idiomatic expressions, specific participants, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd referring	Published interview	Civil rights activist, interviewer	"Two German States"

	terms			
Interview; focus group	Direct questions, 1st and 3rd person referring terms, generic and specific participants, colloquial expressions, flavoring particles	Interview for the *Spiegel* magazine	Students, interviewer	"After the Fall (of the Wall)"
Feature article (newspaper)	Present perfect, time expressions, relative clauses, idiomatic language, 1st and 3rd person referring terms	Interview with newspaper	Students, interviewer, writer	"After the Fall (of the Wall)"
Level IV Text in Context				
Information text	Passive voice, specialized vocabulary, nominalizations	General guide to cultural facts of Germany	Institutions, policy makers	"Higher Education in the German-speaking countries"
Instructions; information text	Imperatives, modal verbs, 2nd person (formal)	Orientation guide, internet	Students, institutions	"Higher Education in the German-speaking countries"
Academic compare-contrast article	Extended attributes, nominalizations, passive voice, topicalization, cohesive markers, generic participants	Academic article	Institutions	"Higher Education in the German-speaking countries"
Editorial	Varied sentence structure, nominalizations, subjunctive, evaluative particles, metaphors, generic and specific participants	Newspaper	Writer, general public (newspaper)	"Higher Education in the German-speaking countries"
Editorial	Varied sentence structure, direct and reported speech, evaluative particles, rhetorical questions, generic and specific participants, markers of compare and contrast	Newspaper	Writer, general public (newspaper)	"Higher Education in the German-speaking countries"
Study report; position paper	Varied sentence structure (i.e., subordination and embedded clauses), markers of causality, extended attributes, generic participants	Magazine	Researchers, countries studied	"Higher Education in the German-speaking countries"
Formal interview	Open-ended questions, nominalizations, extended attributes	Interview for cultural magazine	Interviewer, politician	"Higher Education in the German-speaking countries"

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